

COUNCIL QUESTION
September 27, 2011

Study Session Item 3.1: Zero Waste/Recology

1. a. How is the 73% diversion rate calculated from the SMaRT diversion data for 09-10 (55,100) tons or the 56,600 four year average?

Answer

The 73% is a four-year average of the City's diversion rate (2007-2010). The diversion rate is roughly calculated by dividing the approximately 56,600 tons diverted by 209,000 tons generated and subtracting from 100%. Historically (until 2007), diversion rates were calculated based on a complex formula the State required cities to use. The calculation took into account a variety of factors including the amount of waste generated, the amount of waste diverted, economic growth factors, employment, population changes, consumer price index, etc. Over time, the diversion rate calculation became problematic because of its complexity, and a per capita methodology was adopted by the State.

b. What else is included in the diversion rate besides the combined waste diverted from the landfill + yard trimmings + recyclables brought to the SMaRT facility (21,363 tons for 09-10)?

Answer

Diverted materials include recyclables collected and brought to SMaRT, self-hauled yard trimmings and construction waste that is recycled at other facilities, recyclable materials separated from disposed at SMaRT, and food waste that is part of the pilot program.

c. Specifically explain how the 09-10 49,425 tons disposed at landfill figures in a +70% diversion rate?

Answer

49,425 tons is the amount of waste taken from the SMaRT Station and disposed at Kirby. Waste from Mountain View is also disposed at other landfills, (usually self-hauled there by contractors), so the total disposed in landfill attributed to Mountain View in 2010 was 51,250 tons. Generally, that disposal number divided by the generation number would determine the diversion rate.

d. Is the 5,767 tons diversion for 09-10 comparable to 15% to 18% trash diversion on page 4 of the staff report? If so, 15% to 18% of what?

Answer

Yes, generally speaking, but the 15-18% is a multi-year estimate. It is possible that the diversion percentage for 09-10 was less because equipment at the SMaRT Station may have not been operating at all times due to the construction and retrofitting of equipment that took place at the SMaRT Station that year.

2. a. Annual average MV food waste tonnage = .27 x 56,600 tons = 15,300 tons?

Answer

Based on the waste characterization study, 27% of the waste disposed by residents and businesses is food. The total tonnage of waste disposed by residents and businesses (collected

from homes and businesses and brought to SMaRT by Recology) is about 41,000 tons, so 27% of that number is about 11,000 tons of food. The difference between 56,600 tons (actual disposal to landfill) and 41,000 tons (waste put in carts and bins by businesses) is attributed to: 1) waste from construction and demolition sites ; 2) industrial waste from compactors and debris boxes ; and, 3) and waste that is taken to facilities other than SMaRT, typically construction debris.

b. Is the main reason for composting food waste reducing GHG emissions vs. significant solid waste tonnage to land fill?

Answer

The main reason is to reduce GHG emissions, with conservation of resources and soil building a secondary reason (return organics to the soil), and saving landfill space a third.

c. How are anaerobic and aerobic organic decomposition different in a landfill vs. a composting windrow?

Answer

In a landfill, organics decompose anaerobically (without oxygen) and methane is produced as a by-product. In a composting windrow, decomposition is aerobic (with air) and methane is not created (though carbon dioxide is).

d. For the pilot commercial food waste program, how are the costs for compactors, service, etc. handled? What's the plan when the pilot program is completed?

Answer

The cost of compactors and collection service are paid by the customer. We currently charge the same price to collect food scraps as we do to collect trash, no discounts are offered. Staff suggests asking Recology for optional pricing to take the pilot to a full scale commercial food scraps program and to provide processing/composting services for the material (as indicated on staff report Attachment 9). Once pricing is known, the Council can decide whether to proceed with a full scale program.

3. a. As long as there is and residual and "problem" solid waste, will the landfill still be needed based on today's solid waste planning?

Answer

Yes.

b. What is the long term plan for the landfill as diminishing returns become evident?

Answer

Under Zero Waste, there will still be a need for a landfill, but landfills will fill more slowly. Ultimately there will be fewer open landfills.

4. What does Recology compost now, yard trimmings, commercial food waste from the pilot program and/or other?

Answer

Recology does not currently provide any composting services to the City of Mountain View. Recology hauls yard trimmings to the SMaRT Station, and food waste from the commercial pilot

to GreenWaste Recovery in San Jose. These processing facilities sort the materials for contaminants, and then send them to a compost facility in Gilroy owned by ZBest/GreenWaste Recovery.

5. Is optional pricing by service to the city or for individual customers?

Answer

The optional pricing requested would be quoted by Recology to the City in response to the RFP. Some of the services quoted may be for services provided to individual customers, in which case the cost would be reflected in the solid waste rate charged by the City to that customer.

6. How would universal recycling work as far funding contractors outreach and coordination with customers, containers, etc.?

Answer

The City would look to Recology to suggest approaches to implementing universal recycling. Typically with universal recycling, the hauler is responsible for contacting all businesses and multi-family complexes. The hauler provides the labeled container, posters, and literature. The hauler meets with the business or property manager on site to discuss what technical assistance is needed (employee training or apartment presentations) to encourage employees or residents to recycle. Providing recycling in this manner and technical assistance is not unusual for haulers, who often have a commercial sales team doing the same thing in other markets.

7. Is San Francisco or other known municipality recycling plastic bags? How?

Answer

The Recology companies serving Santa Clara, Morgan Hill and Cupertino are collecting plastic bags for recycling. The bags are reportedly marketed in Asia, though representatives from those cities could not confirm the final use or destination. To our knowledge, there are no other municipalities accepting them.

San Francisco is not accepting plastic bags. San Jose began recycling plastic bags in 1993 but stopped because there was not enough market value and the bags cause problems in sorting equipment. San Jose pursued an ordinance banning their use which takes effect in 2012.

Generally, do most landscape maintenance contractors haul or not haul yard trimmings?

Answer

It depends on the customer and the amount of landscaping. Most gardeners at large business and apartment properties use mulching lawnmowers and haul other yard trimmings. At small multi-family complexes or single-tenant businesses, gardeners may use the customer's yard trimmings containers or dispose of them in the garbage.

Agenda Item 4.5: VERBS

1. Will a safe route for every school in Mountain View including LASD be established?

Or is it possible some areas may not have safe route based on the study?